

**Welcome Speech and Report by H.E Chhay Than, Senior Minister,
Minister of Planning
at the ceremony for releasing the report on
Provisional Population Totals of
the 2008 General Population Census of Cambodia
by H.E.Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior
on September 3, 2008 at Inter-continental Hotel, Phnom Penh**

- Excellency Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, Chairman of National Census Committee
- Excellencies Representatives of Countries, Institutions and Development Partners
- Excellencies Members of the National Census Committee, Census Technical Committee
- Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have great pleasure in heartily welcoming you this morning to this important function organized to release the first publication of the 2008 General Population Census of Cambodia containing its preliminary results. This year our country has witnessed two historic events, the population census in March and the national general election in July.

2. We are very happy and privileged that H.E. Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior who is the Chairman of the National Census Committee that guided the whole census operations has made it convenient to be present here to release the book.

3. As the distinguished participants are aware, the population census is one of the largest statistical operations in any country. It consists of a series of stages and steps that have to be implemented meticulously to achieve a total enumeration of all persons within the country at a specified time particularly to register their count, distribution and their various characteristics. The housing census is a process collateral to the population census aiming at obtaining the number, distribution and characteristics of existing housing units.

4. After the census in the year 1962 which placed the population of Cambodia at 5.7 million there was no census for more than three decades due to internal disturbances. Thanks to the technical and monetary support from the UNFPA the first census in 36 years was held in 1998. It provided population figures at national and sub national levels with a wide range of statistical data on the characteristics of the Cambodian population. With the completion of this census, Cambodia found a place in the census map of the world. The 2008 General Population Census of Cambodia marks the second census after the establishment of the democratically elected Government in Cambodia in 1993.

5. I take this opportunity to express our gratefulness to UNFPA, Japan International Cooperating Agency (JICA), the Government of Japan and the Government of Federal

Republic of Germany for providing financial and technical assistance which made it possible to conduct the 2008 Census.

The 1998 Census together with the 2000 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (2000 CDHS) and the 2004 Cambodia Inter-censal Population Survey (2004 CIPS) has contributed in a large measure to benchmarking important aspects of socio economic conditions of the people.

6. Cambodia is among the poorest countries of the world partly due to a long period of unrest and social dislocation, which destroyed completely the economic and social structure. The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), is implementing a reform process that is basically poverty oriented.

Apart from a series of governance reforms that have been initiated, major programs of economic and social infrastructure development are in progress. To guide the implementation of the economic policy agenda of the Government, the Rectangular Strategy (RS) for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency has been launched in July 2004.

7. In order to implement the development vision set out in the RS, the Government and development partners had agreed to prepare a single planning document, the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), for the period 2006-2010. The NSDP builds on the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals (CMDG), the Socio- Economic Development Plan 2001-2005, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005 (NPRS) and the Governance Action Plan (including the National Public Administration reform).

8. In accordance with UN recommendations and the stipulation in the Statistics Law the Royal Government of Cambodia had decided to conduct a census every ten years beginning from 1998. Accordingly the 2008 census was conducted with reference to March 3, 2008 exactly ten years after the last census was conducted.

9. The preliminary results of the 2008 census being released today are based on careful scrutiny and tabulation of summary figures prepared by enumerators. They give the population of Cambodia and provinces by sex and rural-urban classification. At present, data processing of filled-in census questionnaires of about 2.8 million households is in progress. When it is completed, the final census data in the form of a number of statistical tables will be available. These tables are expected to be ready by the middle of next year. It will be followed by in-depth analysis of the data which would bring out a number of reliable social and demographic indicators and their impact on development. For wider dissemination increased use of census web site will be made. Dissemination and utilization seminars for census data will be held both at national and provincial level to promote utilization of census data. In the meanwhile, it has been decided to release the preliminary figures with a brief analysis to give advance information about the present size and distribution of the population of Cambodia.

10. The 2008 census was conducted under the overall guidance in policy matters by the National Census Committee under the chairmanship of H.E. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior. H.E. Senior Minister, Minister of Planning was the Vice Chairman

of this Committee. The other members included Excellencies Secretaries of State of line Ministries. The committee was assisted in all technical issues by the 2008 Census Technical Committee under the chairmanship of H.E. Senior Minister, Minister of Planning. The National Steering Committee for census information campaign with H.E. Senior Minister, Minister of Planning at the head was responsible to chalk out census publicity campaign to inform and educate the public about the census and solicit their cooperation. Each province had a provincial census committee under the chairmanship of the governor to oversee the census work in the province. All these committees held regular meetings and periodically monitored the census work.

11. The census was carried out under the supervision of the Director General, NIS in the Ministry of Planning assisted by Deputy Directors General. The census office within the NIS coordinated the census work in the country. The Director of Province Planning Office or Province Census Officer (PCO) assisted by Deputy Director/Bureau Chief was responsible for the census in his/her province. The District Planning Officer and the Commune Chief were responsible for the census in their respective areas. The PCO was assisted on technical issues by Regional and Assistant Regional officers drawn from experienced staff of NIS.

12. The 2008 census covered as many as 2.8 million households spread over the different terrains of the 24 provinces of the country. Most of them were enumerated in about 11 days' time. In addition to households living in dwellings, those staying in institutions like hotels, hostels, pagodas, hospitals, prisons etc. were also enumerated. Special arrangements were made to enumerate homeless population, transient population and those found staying in boats on the night of 2 March 2008.

13. The actual enumeration was done on a *de facto* basis by about 28,000 enumerators and 7,000 supervisors who visited every household to interview household members and fill-in the census questionnaires.. There were 72 provincial census officers, 500 field staff trainers, 370 district census officers, 1621 commune census officers and 500 translators, additional supervisors and additional enumerators for special settlements. Selected staff of MoP and NIS participated in training field staff and supervision of field work. Enumerators and supervisors were drawn from teachers and other officials. Provincial, district and commune officers assisted in training and intense supervision of the census count. H.E. Senior Minister, Minister of Planning, H.E. Secretary of State for Statistics and other senior officers of the Ministry of Planning undertook field visits to supervise the census and encourage the enumerators in their arduous job. Representatives of development partners also observed the census field work.

14. One of the most important preliminary steps in census operations is the preparation of village and Enumeration Area maps. This work was undertaken even as early as June 2006 with mapping staff fanning out to all parts of the country to accomplish the work. Village boundaries were checked and measurement of location of each village was taken using GPS device.

The country was divided into a net work of Enumeration Areas containing on an average about 100 households each with a view to entrusting one Enumeration Area to one enumerator so that he or she could completely enumerate the population in the enumeration area within the stipulated period of 11 days.

15. The staff of the NIS is well trained in census operations having had experience of the 1998 census. They in turn trained the provincial staff, regional census staff and trainers of field staff. The near 40,000 fieldworkers were drawn mostly from teachers who did this job without detriment to their teaching work. They were thoroughly trained both theoretically and practically before they were entrusted with field work.

A mammoth statistical and administrative exercise like the census will be rarely free from errors. An evaluation of the census count is done by organizing a post enumeration survey on a sample basis to assess the coverage and content errors. This sample study was undertaken soon after the completion of the census in 100 selected enumeration areas.

16. Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure you would like to know at this stage about the preliminary census results. Though you will be able to see them in print shortly, I feel it would be appropriate to brief this august gathering about the main results.

The population of Cambodia as at 00.00 hours of March 3, 2008 was about 13.4 million consisting of 6.5 million males and 6.9 million females. Cambodia accounts for about 2.3 percent of the Southeast Asian population as it did in 1998 also.

Population Density is measured as the number of persons per square kilometer. It indicates the level of population concentration. The population density for the country as a whole has increased from 64 to 75 during 1998-2008. This is much less than the population density of Southeast Asia (126). The Philippines with 288 is the densest country in Southeast Asia (with the exception of Singapore) followed by Vietnam (254) and Thailand (127). Among provinces population density varies from as low as 4 in Mondul Kiri to 4,571 in Phnom Penh. As regards the natural regions, the plain region is, as is to be expected, the most densely populated followed by the Tonle Sap, coastal and plateau and mountain regions.

17. The annual growth rate of population during the last decade is 1.54 percent at the national level. The corresponding growth rates for urban and rural areas are respectively 2.55 percent and 1.30 percent.

The growth rates vary from province to province depending on natural growth rate and net in-migration or out-migration in respect of each province. While the final tabulation is expected to yield estimates of fertility, mortality and migration that will enable an in-depth analysis of differential growth rates of provinces, and spatial distribution of population, some broad conclusions can be drawn at this stage subject to confirmation when the final data are available.

The annual growth rate of 1.54 which is less than the projected growth rate of about 1.8 percent at national level confirms the soundness of the National population policy of the Royal Government and its implementation. The policy measures recommended for the successful achievement of the principal objectives especially on decision making by couples on the number and spacing of their children, reduction of infant and child mortality seem to show signs of successful achievement.

18. The TFR (total Fertility rate) of 3.4 according to 2005 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) has indicated a fairly sharp decline in fertility in Cambodia from 4.0 children per woman reported in 2000 CDHS. It may be pointed out that current fertility in CDHS 2005 referred to live births occurring in the three year period preceding the survey and in CDHS 2000 it referred to live births in the five year period preceding the survey. Further, infant and child mortality have also experienced a substantial decline.

19. Out migrants to other countries for study, training or temporary work except those working in Cambodian missions abroad would not have been covered in the census conducted on a *de facto* basis. This could have happened in lesser degree in respect of internal migrants also. However, in the future, at province level population growth and characteristics have to be closely monitored through inter-censal population surveys and demographic and health surveys in order to shape the future National population policy accordingly.

In the plain region only Phnom Penh and Kandal provinces have shown growth rates higher than the national level. One of the major factors for this is probably high rate of in-migration into these provinces, especially into their urban areas by job seekers; those who want to pursue higher studies and an increasing number of women workers in garment factories. In the Tonley Sap region, the provinces of Battambang, Bantey Meanchey, Pailin, Siemreap and Oddar Meanchey have shown higher increases.

In the coastal region only Sihanoukville and Kep have registered considerable population increase. All the six provinces of the mountain and plateau region have increased in population at a rate higher than the national population growth rate. It looks as though provinces with low density of population in the north, North West and north east have attracted population from other regions especially the plain region.

Kampong Cham continues to be the biggest province in terms of population. There are shifts in ranks in respect of 12 provinces while 12 provinces retain in 2008 their old ranks. Phnom Penh moves up to the second position with Kandal coming down to the third position. Oddar Meanchey which has registered a very high growth rate of population during the last decade has moved to 17th position from the 21st position.

20. The average size of a normal on regular household (i.e. excluding institutional, homeless, boat and transient household) in Cambodia as a whole has come down from 5.2 in 1998 to 4.7 in 2008. In urban areas the decrease is from 5.5 in 1998 to 5.0 in 2008. In rural areas it has decreased from 5.1 in 1998 to 4.6 in 2008. This is justified by the fact that during the last decade the number of households in the country has been increasing at

an annual rate of 2.7 per cent whereas population increase was at a lower rate of 1.5 per cent. In the recent past the joint and extended families are gradually yielding place to nuclear families for a variety of reasons. Such smaller households seem to be better suited in a developing society.

21. Sex ratio which is the number of males per 100 females is a useful and simple measure of sex composition. A sex ratio of hundred shows a balance of the sexes. Greater the excess of males the higher is the sex ratio; the greater the excess of females, the lower is the sex ratio. In general sex ratio of a population ranges from 95 to 102 except in special circumstances such as history of heavy war losses or heavy immigration. National sex ratios outside the range of 90 to 105 are said to be extreme.

In 1962 the sex ratio in our country was ideally balanced (about 100). It drastically fell down to 86 in 1980, probably due to heavy mortality among men in civil strife. From that year onwards it has been showing an increasing trend reaching 93 in 1998 and 94.2 in 2008. Sixteen provinces have registered a sex ratio higher than the national average. Sex ratio is affected by differentials in mortality of males and females, sex selective migration and the sex ratio at birth. Demographers would like to analyze these factors with reference to sex ratio on the basis of the final census data.

22. The percentage of urban population in Cambodia has increased from 17.6 to 19.4 thereby indicating a progress in urbanization. This increase is not only due to increase in urban population as a result of natural growth and in-migration but also due to area changes based on a different definition for “urban” adopted for the 2008 census. It has to be noted that the urban percentage of 15.7 according to 1998 census had to be revised as 17.6 per cent based on revised definition of urban for comparative purposes in 2004.

23. Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for your kind attention and patient hearing of the important preliminary results of the 2008 census of Cambodia. I hope you will find the book released today useful for reference in the course of your work to help Cambodia march towards development. I once again thank H.E. Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior for gracing this occasion. I request His Excellency to release the report on General Population Census of Cambodia 2008, Provisional Population Totals.